

04/23/93
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TIME

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

Internal Transcript

April 23, 1993

INTERVIEW OF THE FIRST LADY
BY MARGARET CARLSON OF TIME MAGAZINE

MRS. CLINTON: I've done a little bit of shopping, and we've done some meals in restaurants.

Q How do you slip out? Here?

MRS. CLINTON: Not here -- I mean, this is such a crazy three months that I've spent practically nearly a month not here. So it's been kind of a -- there hasn't been a routine yet for the last three months. When I go to sometimes pick her up at school, we'll stop to go shopping and buy shoes for soccer, or stop and get her a pair of shorts, things like that, simple things. And then we've gone out a few times, but nothing elaborate.

Q Speaking of being away, on a stress scale, you've had to change where you live.

MRS. CLINTON: Everything is off the charts --

Q You are off the charts. I mean, to most of us it's just unfathomable. I mean, my own father died last year, and I didn't write a word for six months.

MRS. CLINTON: It's really hard, isn't it?

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: And it comes up on you at odd times, that you just get overtaken.

Q You bury them every couple days --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, that's right. I was in Montana, and something I had promised to do for months now. And actually, I'm really glad I went. I did not feel like going because I was so tired and just kind of drained. But I'm really glad that I went because, first of all, the people in Nebraska and Montana were wonderful, and a lot of people engaged me in talking about my father and what they'd gone through and were very genuinely sympathetic and understanding. But I'd be having a conversation with -- I remember one woman; I was

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standing in this school in Montana, and she started talking about her parents and I started talking about my father, and these big tears --

Q Yes, and only other people who have gone through it --you can imagine it and be sympathetic, but only if it's happened to you can you --

MRS. CLINTON: The difference between knowing it in your head and knowing it's going to happen if it hasn't, and living it in your heart and your gut is just very different.

Q And given how involved you are in the health care stuff, did you have -- you were in an intensive care ward -- in the Texas speech you spoke about the hard decision and who decides, and how did that intersect?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I didn't stop to think about it on a policy level at all. We were just going from day to day. And now that I've gotten a little bit of a chance to get back to normal, whatever that is, I'm going to start thinking about it, because I think I've learned a lot. I just haven't had time to kind of pull it all out and look at it and say what does this mean and how does this relate --

Q Abstract it.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I just haven't. I mean, it's all pretty unformed still. But there's a lot going on. I mean, I know that how tired I still am and how stretched we all were and what an experience it's been. Because you're right -- if you look at moving and changing schools for Chelsea and new house, new role, new demands, the personal -- dealing with my dad and everything -- I mean, it's been a pretty stressful three months. We've only been here three months. (Laughter.)

Q I know. It must feel like three years.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, it does, or 30 or 100. (Laughter.)

Q You feel 30 years older --

MRS. CLINTON: It does get to you. But I actually feel -- today I feel pretty good about it. I feel like we're getting back to settling in and trying to get rooted again. So I think that's going to happen -- I mean, it's going to start happening.

Q Did you get to see your father in time? Did you get to the hospital to see him --

MRS. CLINTON: I'm really glad I got there. For the first of couple of days, we knew that he knew we were there and he was responsive and all of that. And it was wonderful. We were all

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there together, and Bill came. He got to come down on Sunday. It just really made me glad --

Q So what is your routine now that -- (laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: I haven't established -- (laughter.)

Q You have no routine?

MRS. CLINTON: My routine is a nonroutine, right? No, it is -- it's starting to get reestablished. But it's not there yet. You know, we're trying to strike a balance between our family and particularly time with Chelsea and the social demands, plus the projects that I'm trying to help on and involved in -- to find a good balance in the day.

Last night Chelsea was away on a school trip, and then I finally sat down for dinner about -- I guess, about 8:00 p.m. We had been on the Truman Balcony, and it was like somebody had just sort of pulled the plug on all of the cares of the day. You just feel them ebbing away, sitting out there and looking at the beautiful spring. And it was just -- like the sweetest night, too. The air was so soft, it was luxurious. But I felt that way -- I mean, ever since I got back and everything was blooming, Bill and I have just been wondering around here in this daze of spring fever.

Q There's no place more beautiful. The flowers are perfection here. You see that they're tended absolutely --

MRS. CLINTON: And the people who work here tend them like they were children. I mean, they're so devoted to the wonderful house and the grounds. And we had the garden and grounds tour Saturday and Sunday. And on Sunday Bill and I went out and had our own tour. People were coming in, we were walking around seeing the things that they were seeing.

Q You had your own tour.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, we had our tour. (Laughter.)

Q You wanted to see where you lived. (Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, but we had one of the gardeners with us who was posted around to answer people's questions. I think I'm finally, nearly to the point where I know the difference between a saucer magnolia and a tulip tree. I mean, they look so much alike to me. It was wonderful. And you're right, the air and the feel of it was so -- it was like velvet, walking through velvet.

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Q Now, what do you miss most about Little Rock?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I miss my friends and I miss the support that we had there. And I miss the ease that you had in coming and going and having our own life. I miss a lot of that.

Q What's been the best time that you've had here with the President, just the two of you? Or do you get -- other than the Truman Balcony, do you get much time?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes, we have great times. On Valentine's Day, we went to church, and Chelsea was gone again. She had a couple of -- she's made friends here, and she's got overnights and things that are good. She's getting into the swing of things. And we came back from church and we went to the movie theater and had lunch and watched a movie.

Q And what did you see?

MRS. CLINTON: We saw Bodyguard. (Laughter.)

Q Not a good one for Chelsea.

MRS. CLINTON: No, not a good one. Chelsea wasn't there. But it was fun. It was like a perfect Valentine's Day event.

Q And you loved the movie.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know how many movies we've seen. I haven't kept track -- but weekends. But this was special. It was in the middle of the day. It was just the two of us. There wasn't anybody else here.

Q -- totally alone.

MRS. CLINTON: No, but we're working on that, too, because we're trying to work it out so that we do have more time just for ourselves, because, obviously, the job can just eat up every spare minute.

Q Yes, it never ends.

MRS. CLINTON: Twenty-four-hour-a-day job.

Q And what about with Chelsea, what have been the best times?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we've had some -- well, her birthday, I think, was a great time. She had some friends come from Little

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Rock, and she had new friends that she's made here; and all the girls came; and they watched movies and they went bowling; and they stayed up much too late; ran around in the snow outside. It was so much fun.

Q Was that the blizzard weekend?

MRS. CLINTON: Remember, there was two snows. There was one snow and then there was a giant snow. This was the --

Q Pre-giant snow.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, this was --

Q February 27th?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q Now, on the snow day, did you -- Chelsea must have been home. The big snow.

MRS. CLINTON: The big snow -- Chelsea was home.

Q So what did you do?

MRS. CLINTON: We just hung out. We just sort of tooled around. We played games. We cleaned up her room, as I remember. (Laughter.) Trying to get organized -- because we're still unpacking.

Q Do you still have boxes?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yes. We still have boxes.

Q Have you found a good junk drawer yet?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I've found about -- (laughter). There are good junk drawers around. And we had dinner, the three of us had dinner together. We've taken the second floor kitchen, which was a wonderful invention that I will forever be grateful to the Kennedys for, because it used to be that you had -- the families had to go down to the family dining room on the first floor. And that's where you had to eat. And that's where everybody ate every meal. And so when the Kennedys came in with two small children and they just said, wait, we've got to do something about this. So they put in a family dining room, and then they put in a serving kitchen. So then the families would always have their meals in the family dining room, which is a beautiful room. But I also wanted to have even a more informal setting for family meals. So we put a table in the

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kitchen, and we'll eat there, the three of us. I'll cook things there. And Chelsea's had friends over, and they sleep late because, of course, they stay up too late. We have big breakfasts in that room.

Q You've actually cooked in the White House?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I have.

Q You may be the first woman to have cooked in the White House.

MRS. CLINTON: That's what Liz Carpenter told me. (Laughter.) But it was important to us because we like to be on our own. We like to have our family time. It's real important to us. And that's the way we had at the Governor's mansion. You know, we had people around to help and, of course -- but we never had help on the weekends. And we did a lot of our own cooking, and we did a lot of our own taking care of ourselves, particularly on the weekends.

Q But it's harder here.

MRS. CLINTON: It is harder. Well, the routine -- I mean, the house is bigger, it's grander, there's more demands on it. But I also didn't want to get away from having some sense of who we were as a family.

Q Yes, it's something about being able to open your own refrigerator.

MRS. CLINTON: There is a lot about it. There's a whole lot about it. And there's a lot about -- the butlers here are wonderful. Some of them have been here 25 years. And they've been very helpful and good at showing us the ropes. But even as nice as everybody is, you still want family time where you can really let your hair down and you and you can talk about how your day was and figure out what's going on and just sit around the table.

And one night one of the best times we've had since we've been here is -- we got into this silly conversation, just the three of us, because Chelsea was supposed to memorize all of the members of her dad's Cabinet for social studies, as I remember. And it was -- I don't know, we just got the giggles. It was hysterical. It was just the three of us. So we were just rhyming them and it was so much fun. And it was just us. There wasn't any need to worry about anybody else being around. And I think every family needs that, whether they're in the White House or their own house. So we've had some good times as well as some hard ones.

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Q You give the President lots of support and you always have and we always read about that and how wonderful that is for him. Who supports you?

MRS. CLINTON: He does. He does. He is wonderfully supportive. In this past couple of weeks he's just been extraordinary. I mean, he's been such a supportive husband, but he also is a very loving son-in-law and brother-in-law, and it was really wonderful.

Q I think you told someone that it's obvious to people why the President married you, but not so obvious why you married the President.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, somebody said that to me.
(Laughter.)

Q Why would you say that?

MRS. CLINTON: But, I mean, of course, it is obvious. I think it's blatant. I think he has such a great combination of heart and mind -- I told that to somebody when I think somebody asked me that question. I've just never seen anything like it.

Q But I think that you would have a very -- a much narrower life.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I believe that.

Q That would be just like me, some Washington creature, which is much less interesting.

MRS. CLINTON: I think that everybody has an opportunity in their lives to try to figure out what it means for them -- you know, how you define yourself and who you are. And I think experiences of all kinds broadens that. I mean, it has to. We're all prisoners of our own experience, whatever it might be. And the broader it is, and the more challenging it is, the more you have to stretch. And there's no doubt that I've had to do a lot of stretching. (Laughter.)

Q Do you ever exercise, by the way?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q You do? Even now?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. Oh, yes. I mean, I was faithful until the move. I went down to my local Y at home and everything.

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And that's one of the things that I've had a hard time figuring out. I mean, we -- I shouldn't say we -- I have been so tired. I mean, everything about this -- moving and having the campaign and then the transition and the Inaugural, all of which was exciting and wonderful, was also very exhausting.

Q And you need your sleep, don't you?

MRS. CLINTON: I do. I mean, yes, I'm not one of these ever ready -- what do they call it? You know, the energizer --

Q The energizer bunny.

MRS. CLINTON: The energizer bunny. I need, kind of like most people, to get some sleep every once in a while. That's one of the things I've learned in this health care deal is that there really is a phenomenon of sleep deprivation. And you don't make up in any short -- a lot of people think, okay, well, I'll just sleep late on the weekend. You really -- it becomes a true deficit. You don't fill it up by just catching up four hours when you're like 16 hours behind. And I feel like I'm like a million hours behind some days. But I'm catching up.

So I think that part of what we've done is to kind of get adjusted and get in and get organized. But we had to do so many things at one time that, we're still trying to get it all straight in our minds.

Q People cite that in taking on the health care task force, the President may have created problems for himself because, unlike James Baker or John Sununu, you cannot be fired. Are there any problems for you? I mean, this is different from education in Arkansas. Is there anything about it that you think about?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, sure. I think about it a lot. But I think about it more not in terms of problems that it might cause, but more in terms of the willingness of Bill to say, look, we're going to take this on and do the best job we can with it. And it might not be easy, which it isn't, but it's been ignored and the problems have been denied. And so we're going to get out there and do the best we can. And by his asking me to do that, he doesn't -- he's not looking for deniability. He's not looking for distance.

I think that's one of the things that people in this town don't get yet. I mean, he really believes what he's doing, and he really doesn't care who gets the credit. He thinks the country has serious problems that have been ignored and neglected, and he wants to be a part of solving them. And that's one of the reasons why I supported enthusiastically his decision to run, because I think

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that somebody needs to tackle them, too -- not just one person. I mean, all of us. But with a President who gives you leadership on it. So we just don't think about it that way.

Q What if you disagree in the end?

MRS. CLINTON: It's his decision. I mean, my task was to put together a process to give him good information on which he could make good decisions. And I, like a lot of the people who are involved in this, will offer recommendations, will tell him what we think. But he has to make the final decision. That's the way it is, and it's the way it should be.

Q When do you stop talking about work? When you go upstairs? When you go to bed?

MRS. CLINTON: All of those. All of those. I mean, sometimes during the day we'll -- I don't know. Last week, maybe, the week before -- I can't remember the time -- he called me up and said, "Why don't you come have lunch with me?" He said, "It's the first time I'm going to have a lunch in my little outside private patio." And so we sat there. But everything wasn't in bloom yet, but it was on the verge of being spring. And we just sat there and talked about all kinds of things.

And then I might see him an hour later for a meeting about health care. So it's -- the personal is predominant, but it's often interwoven with the policy stuff that I'm working on or that he has something he wanted to talk to me about. Like last night we were having dinner -- we were just sitting there. And we were talking about books and a crossword puzzle, which he was still working on, and just spending --

Q Do you do those?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Does he ask you give me a six letter word for --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q -- a river in Germany?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q And what do you say?

MRS. CLINTON: I say Rhone? Rhine? (Laughter.) How many letters?

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Q Do you see as much of him as you did before? I mean, are you in parallel universes where you have such a big --

MRS. CLINTON: I see a lot of him. I see him more than I saw him in the campaign, for sure.

Q How about in Arkansas?

MRS. CLINTON: I see him about the same, maybe even a little bit more. Because I'm not off at my law office. I'm right here and so is he. So during the day I can see him any time I want to basically. I can look out the window and see him. You know, he's right there.

Q Do you talk on the phone? Do you -- during the day, do you --

MRS. CLINTON: He just called me.

Q -- run up and down? He just called you?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, he just called me.

Q What did he say?

MRS. CLINTON: He called to see how I was. It was really nice. He was just seeing some old friends of ours and wanted to tell me that he had seen them and wanted to see how I was.

Q He does crossword puzzles, and what do you do? Do you read or --

MRS. CLINTON: I read.

Q What are you reading now?

MRS. CLINTON: What I'm reading now is -- I just finished a wonderful book, "The Broken Cord," about fetal alcohol syndrome.

Q Oh, Michael Dorris.

MRS. CLINTON: And Michael Dorris' other book, "Yellow Raft in Blue Water," which I think is terrific. And I'm now reading an Eleanor Roosevelt mystery, which are all set in the White House which are great fun. And I have become quite a fan of Gameboy.

Q I've heard. Chelsea has to pry it out of your fingers now.

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MRS. CLINTON: I bought my own.

Q Oh, you bought your own, now. How long ago?

MRS. CLINTON: A couple of weeks ago.

Q Oh, great.

MRS. CLINTON: I really became addicted in the hospital. I'm going to seek treatment. (Laughter.)

Q Is there -- you can have that part of health care.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q A detox -- (Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. (Laughter.)

Q Now, TV. Any programs?

MRS. CLINTON: We don't watch much TV. Though we do -- we'll relax in front of TV. Like, we like old movies and so we look for old movies. And sometimes really old movies. Like there was an old movie on the other night that we were just hysterical about. It had to do with a band that went to an old house and people like Peter Lorre and Boris Karlof and Kay Kaiser and --

Q My daughter says, "If it's in black and white, Mom, you'll watch it."

MRS. CLINTON: That's it. That's it. That's exactly what it was. I mean, neither of us ever heard of this movie before. We were just --

Q You must get the American Movie Classics channel here.

MRS. CLINTON: I think it might have been on AFT.

Q But you must watch Evening Shade and Hearts Afire.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we're hardly ever home in time to do that. Sometimes I get to watch, and sometimes they'll send me a tape of something they want me to see. But I hardly ever am here. We usually have to eat at 7:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. Or we're out again, or we're not back. It's hard to watch it. So usually the TV -- if it's turned on, it's turned on kind of late, because that's the only time we really have together. He watches lots of professional sports.

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Loves every -- well, he watches every kind of sports, professional and amateur.

Q Now, how much does the President talk to you about other things other than health care, like, for instance, did you talk about Waco yesterday or over the weekend?

MRS. CLINTON: No, no. But we talked about it yesterday as it was going on. We didn't talk about it over the weekend. He had lots of talks about it, but not with me.

Q Are there other things that --

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, you know, just in the course of the day or in the course of a conversation he'll share something and say, what do you think about this, or do you have an opinion about that? And sometimes I'll raise something. I'll say, gee, I heard this. What do you think about it? You know, it's just kind of a give and take. It's pretty informal.

Q Now, you get up at 7:00 a.m.?

MRS. CLINTON: It depends.

Q Chelsea goes off around 8:00 a.m. or so?

MRS. CLINTON: Chelsea goes off around 7:30 a.m. And that's one of the things that we're still not on a regular -- real regular schedule. We get up about -- we're supposed to get up about 6:00 a.m. or 6:30 a.m., and we usually get up around 6:00 a.m. or 6:30 a.m. But sometimes in the last couple of weeks it's just been too hard, because we've been staying up so late trying to catch up on stuff. Once we get back to having a schedule, we'll get up about 6:30 a.m.

Q And then you come downstairs at 9:00 a.m. or so?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, about 8:30 a.m. or 9:00 a.m.

Q Do you get to have like a second cup of coffee upstairs? Do you read papers?

MRS. CLINTON: I have a little study upstairs that I have a lot of -- like, I pay my bills, I do my personal correspondence --

Q You pay your bills?

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MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have -- yes, I sign all the checks. I have some help in getting them organized now. But I like to keep track of all that and make sure that it's all in order.

And so in the morning, like yesterday morning I had to get up real early because Chelsea was going on this school trip. And so I had to help her get packed. Or I'll get up and I'll have a stack of things that I need to take care of in the house and so we'll talk to the housekeeper or the usher or somebody about that. It's kind of -- I try to get personal and house things taken care of before I go over to work on the other stuff.

Q And are you -- get up out of the office and go talk to people, or do you try to stay put?

MRS. CLINTON: Both. I mean, I do a lot of running around. I do -- over at the Old Executive Office Building, I'm down in the -- near the President's office. I'm in other offices on the second floor. I'll go to the Hill.

Q Are you familiar walking around here? People see you in the halls and --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q It's pretty casual?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I think so. I go down to the Navy Mess a couple of times, or I'll have food sent up.

Q Tell me about the day that you said, "Oh, let's all go have lunch."

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, we had so much fun. We had a great time. There's kind of a room -- it's a narrow room, so we had a long, narrow table. We probably had 15, 16 people, Lisa? We were just all jammed in there. We had a great time. It was so much fun. And it was the day they served Oreo cookie yogurt. I mean, it was a great day. (Laughter.)

Q Any day with that or -- coffee Heath bar crunch. That's another good day.

MRS. CLINTON: I have the most wonderful group of people working with me. Really -- I'm so lucky, because I have energetic, caring, smart, committed people. And it makes my life not only a lot easier, but a lot more fun. We have a great time together.

Q Yes. It sounds like fun.

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MRS. CLINTON: Yes, we really do.

Q And you sort of treat them humanely -- let them go home once in a while.

MRS. CLINTON: I have to force them to go home. Say you can go -- we're looking for dates, Margaret. We're looking for dates. (Laughter.)

Q You find one for me. (Laughter.)

MRS. CLINTON: Do you want to be on our list? We're shameless, Margaret.

Q I haven't had a date in so long -- since the campaign.

MRS. CLINTON: That's not good. All right, I've got a new cause. (Laughter.)

Q I'd be out in California and I'd see old friends, and there are different ways of relating. Everybody I know here works harder than I do. Don't you find that you're surrounded by people -- that's why I asked you when do you and the President -- I mean, I find myself -- I don't stop talking about whether mental health is going to be covered until 11:00 p.m. at night. Now, if I don't stop talking about it -- you're out and people are --

MRS. CLINTON: But, you know, we have forced ourselves to stop talking about stuff like that. Because otherwise you don't have any time to be with each other as people. You can kind of get overwhelmed by --

Q You once told me that the President can do like four things at once: watch TV, read a book, talk on the phone, and do the crossword puzzle.

MRS. CLINTON: And eat, that's five. (Laughter.)

Q Now can I just ask you a really off-the-wall question just on the record -- have you ever thrown a lamp, a vase, or a Bible?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Or any objects?

MRS. CLINTON: Nope.

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Q Other than, let's say, a round ball?

MRS. CLINTON: Or an oval ball.

Q No, it doesn't sound like you.

MRS. CLINTON: No, it's not me. I thought the best response -- when that first came up, Neel Lattimore, our token male -- (laughter) --

Q And he does a good job at it.

MRS. CLINTON: He is great. I love him. You know, when we were in the hospital, day upon day of being there, all of a sudden one day Lisa throws open the door to this little waiting room and says, look what I've got. And she comes in with chips and salsa that Neel had come up with the brainstorm of having everybody send me chips and salsa from a Mexican restaurant in Little Rock. I mean it was so wonderful. It was just the best.

Anyway, so Neel, with that great sense of humor and sense of timing, first time it came up a couple of months ago or something somebody called and asked that. He said, how did you find out? (Laughter.) We thought we could keep this a secret. Not only did she throw it, she hit him. We buried him in the Rose Garden. (Laughter.) I mean, that's how we thought of it. We thought it was so silly.

Q Do you -- when you hear it, isn't there some part of you that just gets angry at that kind, I don't know -- here's one of the things that strikes me, is that it's always about you. You are the one who always comes off worse in the stories and I was just telling Lisa I hate when women come off worse in these things in general.

MRS. CLINTON: Somebody is obviously serving some purpose by trying to promote these stories. I mean, there's something that I find real interesting. I mean, why are they telling lies about me? What is it about me?

Q Yes, what is it about -- why do you scare them?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't understand it. I mean, it's just strange to me. But, obviously, that's what has to be going on, you know, people are out there trying to promote this silliness.

Q What do you tell Chelsea? How do you protect Chelsea from what she must hear?

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MRS. CLINTON: Oh, the same thing we've been telling her ever since she was old enough to realize her father was in politics, which is that it's sad but true that some people will lie about you and will make up stories that they think will help them and hurt you. And you can't take it personally because they're doing it for their own reasons.

Q She gets it?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I mean, it took a lot. It was so interesting the first time Bill and I had that conversation with her when she was about six and we thought she was old enough to know that these kinds of things might happen. I remember her eyes got so wide, you know, when we told her that her daddy was going to run for governor again and maybe people would say mean things about him. And I told her, they might even say mean things about me. You just try to prepare her. Her eyes got really wide, and she said why, Mommy, why would they do that? And I had to look at her like you do sometimes with your child and say, honey, I don't know why. I have no idea. And I can't explain it to you. I just want you to know that some people are like that.

Q That it will be there.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. She gets friends that tell her stories that they've heard about her, you know. And she just shakes her head and just goes on from there. I just think it's unfortunate. It's sad.

Q How much does she miss Little Rock?

MRS. CLINTON: A lot. She misses her friends.

Q It's so hard at that age. You know, I thought about moving to New York when Courtney was 12, and I knew I couldn't both take on a new job and move her. I could do one or the other.

MRS. CLINTON: It is really an adjustment to move from the only place you've ever known and all your friends. She is a wonderful person and has great internal resources, but it's hard.

Q Do you really try to spend -- she gets home what 4:00 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 5:00 p.m.? It varies, I guess.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it varies. We really do like to spend a lot of time together, as much as we can anyway.

Q What about your getting to her softball games and things? Are you negotiating with the White House press corps? I was

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talking to someone who said, now, if you could just stay across the street, which seems a reasonable request.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think her father really wants to go to her games. I don't have that kind of problem.

Q No. People sort of leave you alone.

MRS. CLINTON: And they leave Al and Tipper alone. I mean Al and Tipper go to all their kids' games and the press doesn't come, nobody comes. And I think Bill deserves to have some of that same space to be a father and to have some normal family.

Q It causes more pleasure than pain to Chelsea when he comes. Well, maybe they'll somehow come to a --

Now, do you miss having your law firm and your own kind of independent operation where you get up and go off and it's all yours?

MRS. CLINTON: I miss things about it. I miss the people, the wonderful friends and great people to work with. I miss the independence that came with having that. But so far I've had really little time to worry about what I'm missing. I'm just trying to keep my head above water and do what I'm doing right now as well as I can.

Q Do you ever look beyond this to -- I mean when you get your time sort of?

MRS. CLINTON: I really don't think like that. I never have. I just kind of think about how can I do what I'm doing now the best I can do it. And that's all I can ask of myself. And that's what I'm trying to do now. It is just like a three-ring circus all the time.

Q Just one foot in front of the other?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, there's just so much going on.

Q Now, do you see your mother enough?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, my mother's here right now. She came back with me after the funeral.

Q Oh, that's great. Does she just stay --

MRS. CLINTON: She's going to stay for a while and kind of get her feet on the ground.

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Q That must be nice for Chelsea.

MRS. CLINTON: It's really nice for everybody. It is for me.

Q Now, will you get some vacation time?

MRS. CLINTON: I hope so.

Q Where will you go? What will you do?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know. I really hope we get some time. I think we're going to try to go to Camp David more. Every president that Bill has talked to, which is all the living presidents, have all said the same thing -- go to Camp David. Take advantage of Camp David. And we went there just overnight after the funeral and it really was decompressing. It was so relaxing.

Q Did you play games and do sports there? Did you watch movies?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, gosh, oh, yes. We got there pretty late on Saturday, but we played video games, played the pinball machines. My brothers and Bill played golf. We went out and spotted deer and, you know, just had a great time.

Q Do you see yourself just saying we have to go for three weeks or something? You have not -- I'm thinking, okay, you're going away this weekend, but you're going away with the United States Senate.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right, me and the Senate.
(Laughter.)

Q A real romantic weekend to historic Jamestown with Bob Byrd.

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know because I don't know that we're going to get much more of the weekends for a while. I think we need more of the weekends, but I don't know if we're going to get them.

Q Maybe in the summer.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q Is there any difference in friendships now? I mean, do you sort through people any differently or are there more people coming to you?

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MRS. CLINTON: I don't see much difference between what we're doing, getting to know people, and what you always do when you move somewhere new. I mean, we're meeting people and spending time with them and getting to know them better.

Q How do you do that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't really know. I mean, you see them socially and see them in work context. I mean, it's pretty much just like everybody else.

Q Do you get out to dinner much socially like over to someone's house or --

MRS. CLINTON: We have a couple of times. And we've had dinners at a couple of restaurants with friends. But that was with people we already knew.

Q Do lots of people invite you? I wonder if anybody thinks they can invite you.

MRS. CLINTON: People invite us. We're going out to dinner tonight. We're going over to some people's house.

Q So it can be done.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q And does the pool go or you just go?

MRS. CLINTON: I have no idea. I guess they go.

MS. CAPUTO: That's Dee Dee's call.

MRS. CLINTON: Everywhere I've gone, they've gone, with him anyway.

Q Have there been people over here? Any good evenings here with friends?

MRS. CLINTON: Wonderful. Oh, actually, we have done more of that than going out. I mean, it's a lot easier for us to have people over than it is for us to go out. So we've had lots and lots of guests. Lots of dinner guests and lots of overnight guests. My roommate from college and her family just left yesterday. They were here over the weekend. And we just have had -- lots of our friends come to see us. And then we have had -- some famous people come and stay who we knew who were in town for one reason or another.

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Q How about -- I read something about too much Hollywood so you may not go see the premier of Dave, the movie, Dave?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't even know about that. What's that?

Q The producer who did Big with Tom Hanks made a movie about the White House called Dave. I think you were invited. I'm sure --

MRS. CLINTON: We get invited to everything; that's another thing. We get invited --

Q How do you sort through it?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't. I mean, most of it is sorted through by my staff. Then they'll come to me and they'll say you've got nine million things to do. Here's what we think is possible, given everything else. I didn't hear about Dave.

Q As you get down to the crunch here on health care, what's it going to be like? Is it just a sprint to the finish line?

MRS. CLINTON: It's going to be -- I have never seen -- well, I shouldn't say -- I have never seen an issue that is as complicated as this.

Q It just keeps sprouting new arms and legs and things?

MRS. CLINTON: No, but what has happened is that we sort of forced the sprouting of everything and now we've got to make sure that we understand the implications of everything that was sprouted.

And the numbers are very tough in the sense that we want to make absolutely sure that what we tell the President we can stand behind. So it has been an extraordinary task. And I give 100 percent of the credit to Ira and Judy and the whole staff over there that have just worked harder than any group of people in a short period of time that I have ever seen.

But it's been a struggle because within the federal government nobody had ever tried to reconcile all the different numbers. So that you've got different departments with different assumptions using different economic models to make projections about costs. And if I had known that when Bill first asked me to do this I would have probably said, gosh, we're going to have to make sure that they do this right. But I would have been wrong because if it hadn't

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been for this process I don't know that there ever would have been a push to get all of it reconciled the way that we're trying to.

And the people in the government who have been working have just been extraordinary. I mean, they have put in very long hours and killed themselves to do this right. So we're getting a point where not only on the issues but on the underlying economic models that are being used, everybody's beginning to develop a sense of confidence about what it all means and where it is, which has never been there for policymaking on health before. It's just not been there. I can see why for 50 years people have sort of tip-toed toward this problem and turned around and run away.

Q Right, yes. They don't want to touch it. It's like the third rail.

MRS. CLINTON: But our failure to touch is spinning us out of control.

Q Now, I know you have to go, but on -- Bob Dole seems to have started out being a little bit difficult, then coming around and saying, you know, whatever you want. How did you -- or going on Larry King and saying, I think she should be in the Cabinet. The President wants her to be in the Cabinet; I think she should -- and on and on.

MRS. CLINTON: But he's married to a woman who was in the Cabinet.

Q It helps, doesn't it?

MRS. CLINTON: And he's been very courteous and supportive to me during this whole process.

Q Are you spending as much time with Republicans or trying to?

MRS. CLINTON: I'm trying to. In fact, I'm going up to the Finance Committee to speak to both --

Q Bipartisan?

MRS. CLINTON: Both, yes, Democrats and Republicans. Because I had to take, basically, three weeks off I haven't done as much as I would like to with anybody. But if you take all the meetings I've had and combine it with the other top staff people in the Health Task Force effort, there have been countless meetings with both Republicans and Democrats. And a lot of the ideas that the

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President has are really bipartisan ideas. Actually, they're kind of beyond politics ideas about how to do things.

So I'm very hopeful that we're going to forge a consensus around a sensible approach that people will feel good about supporting, regardless of whether they are Democrats or Republicans. We've got to get beyond that. We cannot deal with the country's long-term investment in health care and other problems if we don't create a new political center.

Q Now, do you make your own calls to these people?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, sure.

Q One of them said -- I don't think it was Dole, but somebody said they picked up the phone and it was you.

MRS. CLINTON: It was me. (Laughter.) Yes, not 100 percent, but you know, I try to.

Q It would make a novel idea. Do you have your own phones now that direct dial?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q But they weren't there when you arrived?

MRS. CLINTON: No.

Q Two -- his and hers in the family quarters?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, we have -- first time we've ever both had a phone on our side of the bed. You know, he sleeps here and he gets his phone, and I sleep here and I get my phone. (Laughter.)

Q Your own line?

MRS. CLINTON: I think it is -- I think they are separate lines.

Q You need two lines.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, we have two lines up there, that's right. Maybe three lines, I don't know. I haven't looked at the phones.

Q You can call when you want.

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MRS. CLINTON: Hey, but we also have the White House operators, who are wonderful and very helpful when we need to track somebody down, or find out something.

Q Now, what haven't I asked you that you'd like to tell us? Tell the world?

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I don't know.

Q Just 4 million people.

MRS. CLINTON: Just that I'm really excited by the opportunities of what we're doing and I'm having a great time. If I can ever just figure out how to get my sleep in, get my exercise in, get my family time in -- all of that. (Laughter.)

Q Well, there's a lot resting on you because we all count on you to integrate all these things.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, yeah.

Q You're the icon now of integrated womanhood.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, ever since I was in college I've believed in trying to lead an integrated life, and when I get there you'll be the first to know. (Laughter.) And if somebody else gets there, come tell us.

Q Like Life's Little Instruction Book.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I like those.

Q By you.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, actually, when we were in Montana, a teacher gave me this big book from her children to give to Bill, and it was a better life's instruction book than anything I have ever read. It was wonderful. Get enough sleep; don't get too tired; eat the right kind of food; if you give your best that's all we can ask. I mean, it was just -- gosh, it was great. And I took it home and I gave it to Bill and I said, now, I want you to just sit down and read this. This is good advice from these kids.

Q Like the three rules of campaigns: see a phone -- use it; see food -- eat; see a bathroom -- go.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right. You can't go wrong following that little pattern.

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The Clinton Finance Committee awaits.

Q And you just go and you know what to say. I mean, you're just always --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, no I worked on it yesterday and today. I spent about two hours this morning.

Q -- says she doesn't think you need her.

MRS. CLINTON: Are you kidding?

Q She said, we wonder sometimes what we do for her because she can just do it all herself.

END